

Actors with Learning Disabilities

While fame isn't and shouldn't be the only marker for success, it is a definite indicator of it (especially in America where celebrities are treated like royalty). It may also be helpful to your child's self-esteem to provide him or her with examples of successful people with learning disabilities that he or she can readily identify from the media. These notable figures illustrate that a person can achieve great things if they work hard and believe in themselves:

1. Orlando Bloom

This handsome 29-year-old first came into the public eye with his portrayal of Legolas, the heroic elf in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Since then, he has continued to appear in one big budget film after another, including *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, *Troy*, and *Kingdom of Heaven*. The meteoric success of Bloom's career is made all the more remarkable by the fact that in high school, he struggled with dyslexia. Encouraged by his mother to participate in poetry and prose recitals, he found a way to turn his learning disability into a skill. He is now one of the most sought after actors of his generation.

2. Salma Hayek

The gorgeous half-Mexican, half-Lebanese actress overcame dyslexia and learned English in order to become one of Hollywood's hottest stars. After launching a highly successful career as a telenovela actress in her native Mexico, Hayek made a risky move to Los Angeles to pursue a movie career. One of her professional highlights is the movie *Frida*, a critically-acclaimed biopic about the incredible life of Mexican painter and political activist Frida Kahlo. Hayek co-produced the film and garnered a best actress Academy Award nomination for her portrayal of the artist.

3. Keira Knightley

This lovely young actress has starred in many critically and commercially successful films, including the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series, *Love Actually*, and *Pride & Prejudice*, for which she scored a best actress Academy Award nomination. Knightley was diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of 6, but still harbored ambitions of acting in movies, like her parents. After making a deal with her mother to spend her summer vacation brushing up on her reading and math skills, Knightley was signed with an agent and promptly began landing roles on television and in films. The rest, as they say, is history.

4. Vince Vaughan

The charming actor has been Hollywood's go-to funny man since his film debut, *Swingers*. Growing up, Vaughan was placed in special education classes due to his dyslexia. In order to combat the self-esteem damage inflicted by these poorly structured classes, Vaughan developed a quick, cool sense of humor. This brand of humor came in handy in later years when he began taking improv acting classes and has continued to serve him well in his movie career, which has included such hit films as *Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story*, *Wedding Crashers*, and *The Break-Up*.

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